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SOME PROBLEMS IN NORTH AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY.

IN the study of American archaeology we are compelled to apply methods somewhat different from those used in the archaeology of the Old World. While the archaeology of the Mediterranean country and of a large portion of Asia deals with the early remains of peoples who possessed a literature, and whose history is partly known from literary sources, we find in America, almost exclusively, remains of people unfamiliar with the art of writing, and whose history is entirely unknown. The problem, therefore, with which we are dealing is allied to the problem of the prehistoric archaeology of the Old World. The method that is pursued in dealing with the ancient remains of the lake-dwellers, of the kitchen-middens, and of other prehistoric sites, of which we have no literary knowledge, must be pursued in investigations in American archaeology. But even in this case the conditions are not quite comparable. The ancient culture of the people who left their remains in Europe has completely disappeared, and has given way to civilization of modern type. It seems probable that the remains found in most of the archaeological sites of America were left by a people similar in culture to the present Indians. For this reason, the ethnological study of the Indians must be considered as a powerful means of elucidating the significance of archaeological remains. It is hardly possible to understand the significance of American archaeological remains without having recourse to ethnological observations, which frequently explain the significance of prehistoric finds.

It is only in Central America, and, to a certain extent, in western South America, that the archaeological remains have a character similar to those of the Mediterranean area. Only in these regions do we find ruined buildings and monuments that bear inscriptions that may, perhaps, serve to explain their significance.

The problems of American archaeology deal principally with the earliest history of the inhabitants of this country. In some cases the results of archaeological investigation indicate to us fundamental changes in the state of culture prevailing in certain areas, and even demonstrate the migrations of certain tribes. I wish to call the reader's attention in this article to some problems of this character that are met with on the Pacific Coast of our continent.

At the present time the Pacific Coast of North America is inhabited by an enormous number of tribes, diverse in culture. The present distribution of languages suggests that, in early times, extensive migrations must have taken place. The most remarkable fact that we observe in the distribution of languages is the occurrence of a number of isolated points in which Athapascan dialects are spoken. Athapascan is the prevailing language of the whole interior of Alaska and of the Mackenzie basin. It occupies the whole northwestern part of our continent, as far south as a line drawn west from Hudson Bay to the Rocky Mountains.

South of this line a large number of small tribes are met with, speaking Athapascan dialects. All of these are located near the Pacific Coast, in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California. In the far south we meet, again, with a large body of Athapascan tribes, consisting principally of the Navaho and Apache. This peculiar distribution of the Athapascan language, in connection with the irregular distribution of other languages, makes it quite certain that great disturbances must have taken place in that area. In regard to culture we may distinguish four fundamental types on the Pacific Coast,—the Eskimo of the Arctic, the Indian of

Alaska and British Columbia, the type of culture of Columbia River, and that of California. I will not enter into a detailed description of these types of culture. The line between the Eskimo type in the north and the Alaskan Indian type is quite sharp, while the other groups gradually merge into each other.

The distribution of physical types also proves the great diversity in the origin of the tribes of the North Pacific Coast. It is not possible at present to affiliate each type definitely with other known types, but the diversity of form found in the Coast types between Alaska and Southern California is so great that we must suppose that the diversity is a very ancient one.

It is possible to follow, to a certain extent, the history of this area by ethnological methods. When we find certain customs distributed over a definite continuous area, and absent in others, we may suppose that they originated among the people inhabiting this district. In this manner, the study of the ethnological distribution of customs and beliefs may, to a certain extent, clear up the history of tribes.

The study of the beliefs and traditions of the Eskimo of Alaska shows that the fundamental features of their beliefs are common to them and to the Eastern Eskimo, and makes it quite certain that these beliefs must have been the ancient property of the Eskimo. The culture of the Alaskan Eskimo shows, however, certain remarkable differences from the culture of the Eastern Eskimo tribes. All of these features can be explained as due to the influence of the Indians of Alaska, so that we are justified in drawing the inference, in this case, that the whole Eskimo culture has been modified by a later influence. When we follow the Pacific Coast southwest, we find that a sudden change in customs, beliefs, and folklore takes place near the central part of the coast of British Columbia, and that particularly the Tsimshian, of the tribes of this area, show a great many features that differentiate them from other neighboring tribes, so that we may conclude that they are, practically speaking, new arrivals in this district. It can also be shown that the Columbia River must have been one

of the great routes along which Eastern influences were imported on the Pacific Coast. The mythology of the tribes living at the mouth of the Columbia River shows a very great number of elements which can have had their origin only east of the Rocky Mountains. Evidently an old connection between the Pacific Coast and the East has existed here for a very long time. Naturally it is impossible to utilize historical traditions of the tribes for the construction of their history, because all of them are more or less of a mythical character. It is possible to reconstruct the history only by a comparative study of all the elements of their culture.

The study of the ethnology of this region shows, therefore, clearly, that there have been great changes in the distribution of the tribes, but it seems impossible to unravel the early history of these changes. The question, accordingly, arises, In how far can archaeological methods supplement ethnological information? There are two places particularly at which these investigations seem to give promising results. The distribution of languages and customs in Southern British Columbia makes it clear that here important dislocations must have taken place. I pointed out before that the Columbia River must have been the course along which Eastern culture was imported to the Pacific Coast. And finally we may seek by archaeological methods a solution of the question regarding the early influence of the Indian upon the Eskimo.

The archaeology of Southern British Columbia, the first of the areas which I mentioned here, has been investigated in some detail. This work has been done for the Jesup North Pacific Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History, under the direction of Mr. Harlan I. Smith. His investigations prove clearly, that not only have the customs of the people undergone material changes, but also that in early times an entirely different type of man inhabited the area in question. At present the Indians bury their dead in boxes, which are either placed in trees or deposited in caves. In olden times the method of burial was to construct large stone

cairns with a central chamber for the bodies. The peculiar style of carving found in prehistoric remains is in some respects similar to the style of carving found on the plateaus of British Columbia. Pipes are found here which in their type are identical with those of the inland and of the plateaus farther to the south. It is difficult to identify the prehistoric type of this district with any other known type of the Pacific Coast, but its affiliations are decidedly more with the people of the interior and of the Columbia River than with the present inhabitants of the coast of British Columbia.

It would seem from all this, that in early times the affiliation between the coast and the interior was very much closer than it is now, and this fact is in accord with the distribution of languages in this area. One and the same linguistic stock inhabits the interior of British Columbia and Washington, and the coasts of Washington and of Southern British Columbia. Although the stock is divided into a great many different languages, their affinities are quite clear. The archaeological finds make it probable that this stock was in later times assimilated by the northern coast tribes in bodily form as well as in culture.

The archaeology of Alaska offers a problem that is no less interesting. If it is true that the ancient culture of the Eskimo of this district has been affected by the Indians, the question arises, whether the Eskimo were the original inhabitants of this district. There are weighty reasons which seem to favor the theory that in former times this country was inhabited by different tribes. A study of the ethnology of the tribes of Northeastern Siberia seems to reveal the fact that these tribes are more closely associated in culture and in physical form with the Indians of the North Pacific Coast than with the Eskimo of Alaska. If this is true, the inference seems justifiable that the Eskimo are recent intruders in this district. It is not probable that the Eskimo tribes of Alaska can be considered as Eskimo of pure descent, because in them the most characteristic physical features of that type are much weak-

ened. The height of skull, length of skull, and width of face—which must be considered the fundamental characteristics of the Eskimo tribe—are not as marked here as they are farther to the east.

Attention may also be called to the curious distribution of the art of pottery in this area. At the present time, pottery is made only by the Athapascan and Eskimo tribes of the Yukon River. On no other part of the North Pacific Coast is pottery known. It is also unknown to the present inhabitants of Northeastern Siberia. Archaeological investigations made on the northern coast of the Sea of Okhotsk show, however, the existence of pottery among the prehistoric people of that district. Since this is the only place on the whole Pacific Coast, from the Amur River in Siberia northward to Bering Strait, and along the American coast south to California, where pottery is found, it seems to me to speak for an early connection between the inhabitants of these districts.

The problem of the earliest inhabitants of Alaska can certainly be solved by the archaeological investigations. The implements of the Eskimo and their physical type are so characteristic that they cannot be mistaken for anything else. If the most ancient shell-mounds of the east coast of Bering Sea, of which there are a great number, should reveal a type different from the Eskimo and a culture different from that of the Eskimo, we should have a distinct proof of a population preceding the present inhabitants of Alaska. All the evidences we find seem to make it probable that such a change of culture and of type may be found here, and I consider the investigation of this area as one of the important problems of American archaeology.

We may expect that if archaeology in America is applied hand in hand with ethnological and linguistic methods, it will be a most powerful help in unravelling the history of our continent.

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